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INSTRUCTIONS

FOR MAKING

GASPÈ,

AND

MITIS AND RIMOUSKI,

IN THE

River St. Lawrence.

GOULD, DOWIE, & Co.

LONDON.

—
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INSTRUCTIONS.

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Coast of the River St. Lawrence from Gaspè to Quebec—Bay of Seven Islands—Fisheries—Corals—Trinity—Menicougan Shoals—Port Neuf—Tadousac—Saguenay—Chicotomy—Indians—Interior Road to the Upper Province—Minerals—Earthquakes—Volcano—South Shore—Steam Boat—Cape Gaspè—Anse de l'Etang—Matane—Mitis—Eels—Harvest—Road to New Brunswick—Soil—Rimouski—Deer—Geology—Bique—Trois Pistoles—Appearance of the South Coast—Roads: Travelling—Canadian Parishes—Conclusion.

THE coast and interior country of *Lower Canada*, from Cape Gaspè to the Paps of Matan, a distance of about 200 miles, still exhibits the same primeval wildness which this portion of the western world presented to Cartier 296 years ago. The northern shores, from *Labrador to Tadousac*, are equally desolate; and, if we except the king's posts at *Seven Islands' Bay* and *Port Neuf*, we discover no signs of art or civilisation, no traces of the industry or enterprise of man. A few miserable wandering Montagnez Indians, and a few transient fishermen and furriers, are the only human beings that frequent this cold, desert, and barren region. The vast country which lies between the lower shores of the *St. Lawrence and Hudson Bay*, seems, indeed, unfit for any other inhabitants, save the ruthless Esquimaux, or hardy Mountaineer Indian, who wander along its waters, or traverse its wastes; yet the vast swarms of salmon that frequent its rivers, and the remarkably fine fur of its wild animals, offer sufficient temptations to the adventurous, and sources of profit to the industrious.

The *Bay of Seven Islands* lies on the north coast of the *St. Lawrence*, which at this point is seventy miles broad. It derives its name from seven high rugged islands which lie at its entrance. There is deep water close to these islands, which rise abruptly out of the sea, and from ten to fifty fathoms depth of water in the bay. It forms within, a large round basin; and the lands at its head appear sinking low in the horizon, while those on each side are high and rugged. Here there is a king's post rented to the Hudson Bay Company. Humpback whales enter this bay, in which they are sometimes pursued, both by the American and Gaspè whalers.

The walrus, or sea cow, was formerly very numerous in the Gulf and entrance of the *St. Lawrence*, but they have long since fled from the presence and persecution of man. *White* porpoises are common.

In the *Gulf* will be found quantities of coral, at various depths, to thirty fathoms; proving that though the growth of corals is most abundant within the tropics, it is not confined to them.

The best track for sailing up the *St. Lawrence*, nearly as far as *Tadousac*, especially with contrary winds, is along the north coast, as the current runs so much stronger down along the south shore. The shores of *Anticosti* are flat, but the soundings are regular; and lighthouses are erecting on the east and west points of this dangerous island. The *Labrador* coast may be safely approached. It affords harbours, and excellent anchorage, and the tides are nearly regular. *Trinity*, a little below *Point des Monts-Piles*, on which there is also a lighthouse erecting, is a place where ships anchor in proceeding up the *St. Lawrence* with a head wind. *Pilots* usually meet vessels between *Point des Monts* and *Cape Chat*, which is nearly opposite, on the south side. There are *two dangers* to be avoided off the north shore, between *Point des Monts* and *Tadousac*. The first is a rocky shoal, extending several miles off and along the coast at *Manicougan*. Several ships have

been stranded on it. The other is a lesser danger, lying off *Point de Mille Vaches*, a little above the king's post at Port Neuf. There is no further danger until we pass the mouth of the *River Saguenay*.

Tadousac is at the mouth of the river, and has a harbour capable of sheltering twenty or thirty men of war; the river is of great depth and immense volume of water: for a considerable distance from its mouth it is in general bounded by lofty rocky banks, but is not wanting in good harbours—it is navigable for vessels of any magnitude for about twenty-two leagues; indeed large vessels may proceed six leagues further to *Chicotomy*. It is highly probable that the communication with Hudson's Bay, by following up the *Saguenay* with canoes, would not be difficult.

In the neighbourhood of *Chicotomy* and *St. John's Lake*, about 29 leagues up the river, it is said about 200,000 acres of fertile soil is found; and the lake beautiful, as is the scenery in general: but the country bordering this part of the north shore of the St. Lawrence does not hold out much inducement for settlers; neither does the timber offer sufficient encouragement for lumberers or pot-ash makers. At *Chicotomy*, the Jesuits had formerly a considerable establishment, and the appearance of the land attests that they were neither ignorant of its value, nor inattentive to its cultivation.

The *Indians* of this district have, of late, almost disappeared, and appear even to have lost the courage and skill of hunters: and the quantity of peltry brought down by them is much reduced: indeed, were it not for the support afforded them occasionally at the *king's posts*, and by the agents of the *Hudson's Bay Company*, it is probable they would shortly be exterminated.

It has been a matter of consideration how far the *Saguenay* could or ought to be made the entrance port to the Province of *Upper Canada*, by forming a military road from the good land about the lake, westward, across the sources of the rivers *St. Maurice*, *Gatineau*, and *Lelievre*, to the *Ottawa* at Hall

and By-Town (or *Byopolis*), thus joining the *Rideau* canal. This track offers the best land in the district for cultivation, as well as the shortest and most secure military road in case of war.

The *geology* of this part of the Province is as yet but imperfectly known; there is, however, abundance of *iron*: magnetic, and bog ore. Several chalybeate, and some sulphurated and saline springs are known, and even resorted to medicinally, in the neighbourhood of *St. Paul's Bay* and *Murray Bay*;—sulphuret of lead has also been found. There is no want of limestone as a flux for iron: and a most beautifully white marble is occasionally met with, its laminous quality, however, renders it unfit for statuary purposes; but for forging speculations this district is scarcely likely to offer such advantages as *Marmora*, in the *Upper Province*.

Coal has, by many, been expected to be found here, from its proximity to *Nova Scotia*, but the *geology* of this side the *St. Lawrence* rather forbids its expectation. It is not long since that "black diamonds" were actually supposed to have been discovered; and an exploring party were led to a small river, in the bed of which coals certainly were seen; but the party were too scientific to be deceived; and it has subsequently been acknowledged that the coal was from *Newcastle*, purposely laid in the river for a trick. It is far more probable that it will be found on the opposite side of the river.

Slight shocks of earthquakes are occasionally felt: and there is a tradition among the *habitans*, and said to be corroborated by the Indians, that at several days' journey through the woods, to the north-east, there exists a burning *volcano*, and to violent eruptions of which some persons have attributed the occasional *dark days*, as they are called, which happened in *Canada*.

We now return to sketch a brief description of the south coast of the *St. Lawrence*, which has hitherto been neglected in all the English accounts of *Canada* that I have seen. The

counties of *Gaspe*, *Rimouski*, and *Kamouraska*, comprehending a valuable territory, extending about 800 miles along the River St. Lawrence, are less known in England than *Kamchatka*; and shall begin with *Gaspe*, at which port vessels bound to *Messrs. Wm. Price and Co's* establishments at *Great Mitis and Rimouski*, are allowed to call for the purpose of reporting and clearing, in case it should be more convenient to do so than to proceed to *Quebec*.

The great advantage of calling at *Gaspe* is not at this time so apparent; the improvement of the road to *Quebec* and the establishment of a *steam boat* between *New Brunswick* and *Quebec*, offer opportunities for getting to the latter place not heretofore available.

GASPÈ.

On proceeding to *Gaspe* to report or clear, it is not necessary to go further up the Bay than *Douglas Town*, about six miles below *Gaspè*, there to anchor in eight or nine fathoms, and go up in the boat.

There are almost regular *sea and land breezes*. The *sea breeze* sets in about *ten o'clock in the morning*, and continues till about sun-set; it then falls, and about *ten at night the land breeze* springs up. This knowledge may frequently save a day, as *Mr. McConnell* the Collector, is exceedingly desirous to spare Captains any detention.

The rocks called *the Seal Rocks*, and laid down in the charts about the centre of the bay, *do not extend* above half a mile from the south shore.

Cape Gaspe is rather high, and its rocky cliffs are perpendicular. *Cape Rosier* is low, but the land behind rises into high round hills; and the whole is covered with trees of various kinds. The coast preserves this character as we proceed up the St. Lawrence, and generally slopes, covered with trees, to the water's edge. At *Great Fox River* there are

a few fishermen; and at *Anse de l'Etang*, twelve leagues above Cape Gaspé, there is a small harbour for shallops. It may be known by a remarkably high wooded conical hill on the east side, and by a beach with a few huts and stages on the west. Some of the *habitans* of the parish of St. Thomas, on the *River de Sud*, thirty miles below Quebec, frequent this place during the cod-fishing season. The river issues from several lakes, one of which is only half a mile through the woods from the fish stages. Fishermen also frequent *Grand Vallée des Monts*, *Magdalene*, *Mount Louis*, *St. Anne's*, and *Cape Chat*, during summer; but we believe there are no permanent settlers, (unless it be at St. Anne's,) until we reach *Matane*. As far, however, as we could judge of the country, it appears to possess sufficient advantages for settlements. The shortness of the summer, and the *severe* cold of winter, may present objections to agriculture; but the severity of its climate differs little from that of the thickly settled agricultural parishes about 200 miles farther up than *Cape Gaspe*; nor is it so cold as many parts of the corn countries of Russia. The soil in the valleys is fertile, and the uplands appear also to be fit for cultivation. The trees, growing on the hills, and on the sloping high lands, facing the coast, if used in ship-building,—and there are abundant convenient situations for building vessels,—will be found far more durable than those which grow in the valleys or along the rivers and lakes of the upper country. The “scrubby oak” of the hills, as it is called, is considered a durable timber.

In proceeding up the *River St. Lawrence*, after passing *Cape Chat*, the first place of remark is *Matane* River, known by a large square white house, and a long barn, level on the top. Ten leagues farther up is *Little Matis* or *Mitis*, situated on a long, low, flat, rocky point, with several white houses, extending about a cable's length to the *north-east*. This is noticed as a guide to the anchorage at *Great Mitis*, which is about six miles farther to the westward. On opening the bay,

(say close in shore,) a square house will be first observed, near the water side; a mile farther, in the *south-west* corner, up the bay, in the same view, will be seen the upper part only of a house, which is the establishment of *Great Mitis*. A vessel may close in with *Little Mitis Point* into six or seven fathoms water, and turn for *Great Mitis*, by the lead, in from five to eight fathoms. Should the vessel be turning up on the north shore, or in mid channel, *Mount Camille*, which will be seen, should be brought to bear *south-west by south*, which will lead from sea to the bay. As this place has only recently been visited to any extent, I have thought it worth while entering into the particulars.

At *Little Mitis* the late John M'Nider, Esq. of Quebec, a gentleman of considerable enterprise, established a fishery, with the intention of supplying Quebec, during the summer, with fresh fish, as well as for curing. Notwithstanding the abundance of fish, the scheme did not answer, and we believe has been attended with considerable loss; the fish in this part of the River St. Lawrence has been found to be capricious in its haunts; perhaps annoyed by the small whales and porpoises which abound.

Eels are very abundant in the rivers of this Province. The eel fishery on the river St. John has been let for £400 per annum,—when cured and packed they are sold at three pounds currency for the barrel of 200 lbs. weight. Their manner of generation is a mystery here, as well as every where else; and even among the Indians, those close observers of nature:—they run down from the lakes to the sea from August, till the frost stops them. In the true spirit of economy the real '*Jean Baptiste*' uses the eel skin as a tie for his *queue*.

Mr. M'Nider also endeavoured to settle and clear the seigniory for cultivation; and many settlers proceeded thither at different times; but the spirited proprietor died in 1829, without having reaped those benefits from his exertions which might have been anticipated; the situation, perhaps, not

offering first-rate advantages as regards climate, or, (at present) proximity to markets for surplus produce.

The settlements do not go above six miles back, for a considerable distance towards Quebec; many clearances have been made on the flat land between the river and first rocky ridge, and in the autumn of 1828, on one of these little farms, wheat returned 18 for 1. Barley and oats both grew well upon it; the season, however, had been very favourable for that neighbourhood.

GREAT MITIS.

About five miles farther west is *Grand or Great Mitis*. This place has lately risen into notice by the erection of saw-mills by *Mr. William Price of Quebec*, by whom a very considerable outlay has been made; and by the constant employment afforded by the mills, and felling of logs in the winter, an active little settlement has been created.

The mills are on a fall of the *River Mitis*, about three miles up: this river, like the Chaudiere, near Quebec, and most others on the south side of the St. Lawrence, comes tumbling over rugged rocks of considerable elevation, as it approaches the estuary. The river itself is a small stream, greatly impeded with rapids when not swelled by freshets; and it has been found necessary to dam the river with wicker work and mud for a considerable distance, to keep back water enough to float the logs down to the mill. From the mill the deals are floated down a *dall* or *trough* to the basin for shipment; part of the distance being cut through soil and rocks fourteen feet deep. The deals produced are spruce, and a very superior yellow pine.

At about half a mile from the *debouche* of the river is a small *rocky island*, by which a secure and picturesque basin is

formed. Over the *sand bar* at the entrance of the basin there are *fourteen or fifteen feet at low water*, and ample room for two vessels to lie stem and stern of each other. *The tide flows exactly at one o'clock at full and change, and rises from twelve to fourteen feet.* The channel is now marked with buoys into the basin.

With a ship of great draught of water it is advisable to lie in *six fathoms at low water*, with the house at the east side of the River Mitis open to the *eastward* of the island in the bay, so that the river may be seen between them. The high land of Bic will then be just clear of *Point Aux Snelle*, some of the houses of *Little Mitis* will be seen, and *Mount Camille* will bear SSW. by compass; in such a mooring the swell is broken before it comes in by the shore. The ground will be found excellent for anchorage, being clay; and, with one anchor to the eastward, and another to the westward, the vessel will ride in perfect security. A vessel of smaller draught may go within five fathoms.

From hence, along the shore, will be observed, at great distances, the small white houses of the *habitans*; in general, however, occupied by pilots or fishermen, who have cultivated small patches of the land around them. Occasionally, when, from a wet summer, the harvest of the westward has failed, these small farmers reap a benefit by the greater backwardness of their seasons.

The House of Assembly of this province lately voted money for the completion of the road from Quebec hitherto, as well as for opening a communication with *Miramichi* and *St. John's, New Brunswick*; and, during the last season, considerable progress has been made in them.

The land along this road, (indeed generally from the descent of the highlands) to New Brunswick, is reported as excellent—and there can be little doubt of its being settled ere long; and to this object, the intended military road through New Brunswick will materially tend.

The Province of *Lower* Canada, even in these its coldest parts, is decidedly more healthy and agreeable to a British constitution than the *Upper* Province, or western parts of the United States; fever and ague being unknown in it.

RIMOUSKI.

At *Rimouski* are saw-mills, recently erected by *Messrs. Wm. Price & Co.* of Quebec. The locks and dam by which the head of water for the mills is kept up at the mouth of the little River *Rimouski*, are of considerable extent, and executed with great boldness. The timber cut down here, although so near to the yellow pine of *Mitis*, is all red pine, which, though small in size, is of excellent quality.

Ships bound to the anchorage at *Rimouski* should endeavour to close in with the land about *Point au Pere*, or Father Point, (on which are the numerous white houses of the pilots,) into six or seven fathoms, and then steer due west, for about three miles, for the body of *St. Barnaby's Island*, until the extreme eastern point (on which is a large round stone) bears, by compass, WNW. about three-fourths of a mile, in four and a half fathoms at low water. *Rimouski church* will then bear about SSW., and a round bluff island between *St. Barnaby's* and the main WSW., and Father Point E. by N. As the water shoals gradually towards *St. Barnaby's Island*, ships of light draught of water may go something nearer, taking care to allow for three or four feet send in the event of a north-east gale. With westerly winds, which generally prevail, this is a most smooth and secure anchorage. Ships intending to load here should moor NW. and SE., with not less than sixty fathoms each way, so as to have an open hawse to the NE. Ships coming to anchor off the west point of *Barnaby's Island*, will find a most secure anchorage from east and north-east winds in four fathoms at low water, having the east end of *Bique*

Island at W. by N., the point of land from *Bique* at W. by S., the west point of *Barnaby* bearing NE. and by N. half a mile.

At either of these settlements fresh beef can be got through the Superintendent at a low rate—there is no venison in the summer season ; indeed there is strong reason for believing that in North America the deer are never stationary, unless in the neighbourhood of Salt Springs, of which none are known in this vicinity.

From *Rimouski* we may ride or drive in a wheeled carriage through all the Canadian parishes. The road to Quebec is for the most part excellent. At *Bique* there is good anchorage; but the coast, nearly as far up as *Trois Pistoles*, is steep and iron-bound. Small rocky islets rise along the river from two to three miles off the shore, from which mud flats, nearly dry at low water, and producing a long marine weed, (*eel grass*,) extend about the same distance from the coast as the islets. These mud flats occur along the St. Lawrence wherever there are eddies, and particularly within the small islands that lie between the channel and the shore. We observe this particularly at *Trois Pistoles* and *Green Islands*, at the *Pilgrims*, and at *Kamouraska*. They are formed of deposits carried down by the river, and generally repose on flat rocks. The islets are all rocky. Similar deposits are closing up some of the channels at the mouths of tributary rivers above Quebec, and even shallowing Lake St. Peters.

The River St. Lawrence, and the whole country, from the lowest parishes to Quebec, unfold scenery, the magnificence of which, in combination with the most delightful picturesque beauty, is considered by the most intelligent travellers who have visited this part of Canada, to be unequalled in America, and probably in the world. Niagara comprehends only a few miles of sublimity. The great lakes resemble seas ; and the prospects which their shores, like those of the coasts of the ocean, afford to our limited visual powers, although on a grand

scale, fall infinitely short of the sublime views of the St. Lawrence, below Quebec.

It is impossible to travel along this road without observing most evident traces of higher levels of the river than the present one,—the rocks are actually worn as evidently as at the present high water mark ; and many of the sharp points of the lower ones shew, to conviction, that they were once small rocks in the St. Lawrence, or the ocean—and that the now cultivated flat between the first ridge, being the river boundary, and the second ridge, formed, at no very remote period, a part of the St. Lawrence, or of the ocean.

Here we have frequently, as we ascend the eminences over which the post-road passes, or as we sail up or down the St. Lawrence, prospects which open a view of 50 to 100 miles of a river from ten to twenty miles in breadth. The imposing features of these vast landscapes exhibit lofty mountains, wide valleys, bold headlands, luxurious forests, cultivated fields, pretty villages and settlements, some of them stretching up along the mountains ; fertile islands with neat white cottages ; rich pastures and well-fed flocks ; rocky islets, tributary rivers, some of them rolling over precipices ; and one of them, the Saguenay, bursting through an apparently perpendicular chasm of the northern mountains : and, on the surface of the St. Lawrence, majestic ships, brigs, and schooners, either under sail or at anchor, with pilot boats and river craft in active motion.

In winter the river and gulf are choked up with broken fields of ice, exhibiting the most varied and fantastic appearances ; and the whole country on each side is covered with snow ; and all the trees, except the stern fir tribes, are denuded of their foliage.

The south shores of the St. Lawrence are thickly settled by the descendants of the French, who at different times emigrated to Canada ; and the manners and customs of their ancestors are tenaciously and religiously preserved by the Canadians, or

habitans, more particularly in this part of Canada, where they have held little intercourse with the English. The villages and parishes have a general similarity of appearance; and although some of them are more extensive, and much more populous than others, yet one description is sufficient for all.

We cannot but be pleased and happy while travelling through them. They assuredly seem to be the very abodes of simplicity, virtue, and happiness. We pass along delighted through a beautiful rural country, with clumps of wood interspersed, amidst cultivated farms, pastures and herds; decent parish churches, and neat white houses or cottages. The inhabitants are always not only civil, but polite and hospitable; and the absence of beggary, and of the squalid beings whose misery harrows our feelings in the United Kingdom, is the best proof that they are in comfortable circumstances. Thefts are rare, and the doors are as rarely locked. You never meet a Canadian but he puts his hand to his hat or *bonnet rouge*; and he is always ready to inform you, or to receive you in his house; and if you be hungry, the best he has is at your service. And were they not acted upon by a certain *few* agitators, they would be the happiest people under Heaven—and the lofty Pole surmounted with a Cock, the distinguishing mark of a Militia Officer, would make the "*Cocq de Paroisse*" as proud of his office as if he held a field marshal's baton. The mildness of British Government, the protection it affords in markets for produce, and the taxation, probably not exceeding *one tenth* of the taxes and rates in the United States, leave these people, *in fact*, no advantage to expect by *change*, and little *in reality* to complain of. The only heavy rate paid by them, is the '*dime*,' or tythe, which, as roman catholics, they pay to their own clergymen, and which is scrupulously collected; from this, of course, protestants are exempted.

The easy manner in which every family makes its own oven, covering an erection of stones, or even wicker-work, with the

mud of the St. Lawrence; and the custom of exposing the family bedding to the air every fine morning, are worthy of adoption in other countries.

But it is high time to bring this little work (which has *grown* under the operation of writing) to a conclusion. It was begun with the sole intention of giving printed Instructions, instead of written ones, to masters of vessels bound to *Mitis* and *Rimouski*. But if, by adding a little general information to dry detail, the writer has afforded the least pleasure to one of those for whom it is intended, he will have been gratified. And if any masters can give any information, respecting the same neighbourhoods, likely to be beneficial to "SHIPS, COLONIES, and COMMERCE," it will be thankfully received by their well wishers,

GOULD, DOWIE, & Co.

83, CORNHILL,
April, 1832.

P.S. It is to be hoped that the laborious, skilful, and scientific surveys of Lieutenant Bayfield, of His Majesty's Ship *Gulnare*, will shortly be published by Government.